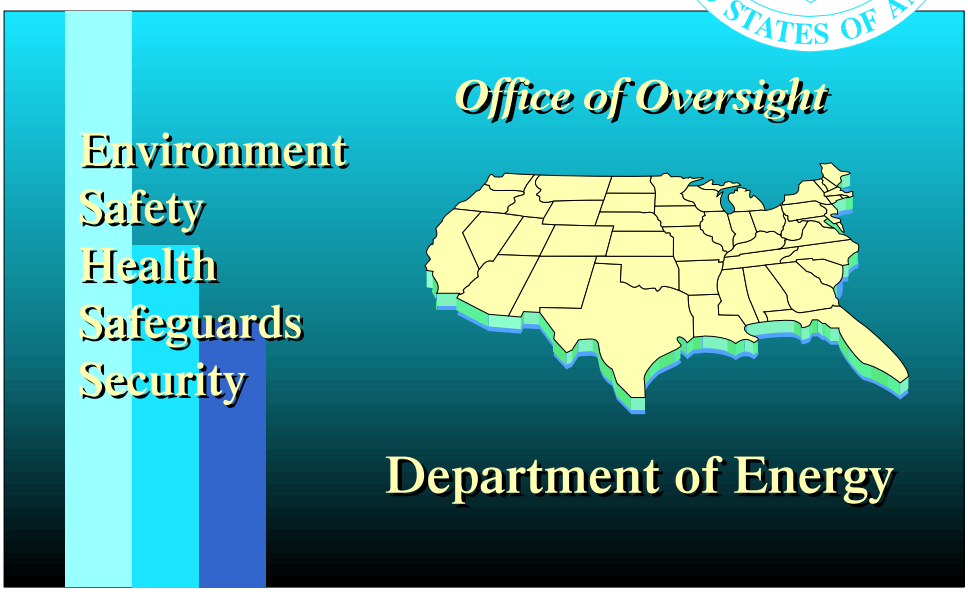
EH2PUB/10-97/15SE

OVERSIGHT

Department of Energy Nevada Facilities

Safeguards and Security Profile Summary Analysis

October 1997



Office of Environment, Safety and Health

1.0 Introduction

The Department of Energy (DOE), Office of Environment, Safety, and Health, conducted a review in October 1997 to determine the status of safeguards and security measures employed to protect the DOE facilities administered by the Nevada Operations Office. This review was part of a recent initiative by the Assistant Secretary for Environment, Safety, and Health to characterize the current status of safeguards and security programs throughout the Department. The Assistant Secretary for Environment, Safety, and Health utilizes the Office of Oversight to provide the Secretary of Energy with independent assessments of the Department's performance in the significant areas of safeguards and security at the DOE Nevada facilities.

2.0 Background

Location

The facilities administered by the Nevada Operations Office are mainly concentrated in southern Nevada, in the vicinity of Las Vegas. These facilities include the Nevada Operations Office and contractor administrative offices in North Las Vegas, the Remote Sensing Laboratory on the nearby Nellis Air Force Base reservation, and the Nevada Test Site, located in the desert 65 miles northwest of Las Vegas. The Nevada Test Site encompasses approximately 1,350 square miles. It is situated in a remote area with restricted access that is buffered from the public on three sides by the Nellis Air Force Base Bombing and Gunnery Range, which represents an additional 4,120 square miles of federally-owned, restricted access property.

Mission

From 1951 until 1992 the principal mission of the Nevada Operations Office and the Nevada Test Site was the conduct of nuclear explosive testing. Although resumption of this test mission is not anticipated, the Nevada Operations Office continues to be responsible for maintaining the capability to resume such testing should the need ever recur. At present, Nevada Test Site facilities are being employed in a program of subcritical nuclear tests designed to obtain additional technical information without full-scale weapons testing. In addition, the Nevada Operations Office has undertaken adjunct mission responsibilities in such areas as stockpile stewardship, crisis management, environmental management, and scientific and technical development. Other missions include support for the DOE Nuclear Emergency Search Team (NEST).

Security Assets/Interests

Security interests at the Nevada Operations Office facilities include the periodic presence of Category I and II special nuclear material at the Nevada Test Site and holdings consisting of Category IV radioactive sources and classified and sensitive information at the North Las Vegas administrative complex, at the Remote Sensing Laboratory, and at the Nevada Test Site.

Protection Strategy

The protection strategy at the Nevada facilities varies in accordance with the security interests being protected. Since small radioactive sources and classified and sensitive information are present year-round, permanent security areas are maintained in accordance with DOE orders to protect these assets. A layered protection strategy is employed for the protection of Category I and II special nuclear material, with provision for the storage and use of such material at designated Protected Areas and material access areas, each with several layers of detection, assessment, delay, and response features. However, since Category I and II special nuclear material is typically *not* present at these locations, the actual implementation of security measures may vary.

3.0 Results of Past Safeguards and Security Reviews

The most recent reviews of safeguards and security programs conducted by the Nevada Operations Office have been positive. Similarly, the results of recent self-assessments by the various contractor organizations at the Nevada Operations Office facilities have also been positive. The results of the review indicate that the Nevada Operations Office has maintained the strengths recorded in recent Office of Security Evaluations inspections and has made substantial progress in addressing problem areas observed during these inspections, most notably in the area of unclassified computer security at the DOE Nevada Operations Office.

4.0 Results of This Review

Positive Trends and Initiatives

The most positive program attributes cited by Nevada Operations Office managers were staff competence, stability, and experience. Managers view these attributes as the basis for confidence in the ability of the program to successfully resolve current and future program challenges. Higher-level management support, the positive working relationship between the DOE and contractor organizations, and the role of the Joint Test Organization in integrating laboratory security requirements were also identified as positive program attributes. Other notable accomplishments include the close working relationship with local, state, and Federal law enforcement agencies and the establishment of a nationally-recognized operations security program.

The profile development team noted additional positive program attributes beyond those cited by Nevada Operations Office managers. The Nevada Operations Office unclassified computer security program has been converted from a longstanding program weakness to a distinct program strength. Nevada Operations Office enhancements to the personnel assurance program, including additional background checks and interviews, represent significant improvements in an already well implemented program.

Several recent Nevada Operations Office accomplishments and initiatives deserve emphasis. The successful transition to new administrative offices has permitted the more

effective integration of security and operational functions. The development of the Mobile Intruder Response Vehicle, a state-of-the-art vehicle specially adapted to the needs of field security operations at the Nevada Test Site, is yet another accomplishment. The outstanding performance capabilities of the Mobile Intruder Response Vehicle have captured the attention of other law enforcement and security agencies.

Above all, the impending activation of the Device Assembly Facility represents a significant advance over traditional special nuclear material facilities. The protective features built into the Device Assembly Facility equal the best found anywhere in the DOE complex, and the integration of detection, delay, and tactical response features significantly enhances the ability of the protective force to effectively counter potential hostile actions. Although some work remains to be done in the area of alarm processing before the Device Assembly Facility is fully operational, this facility already represents an important accomplishment for the Nevada Operations Office safeguards and security program, and it also represents an impressive new asset for the DOE as a whole.

Issues Warranting Management Attention

No significant weaknesses were noted in the overall implementation of the safeguards and security program at the Nevada Operations Office facilities. The various indicators considered during this review support the conclusion that the national security assets at the Nevada Operations Office facilities currently receive adequate protection against the acknowledged threats. Although there are several outstanding issues involving safeguards and security planning and the completion of certain Device Assembly Facility systems, Nevada Test Site management is already taking steps to address these issues.

Given the present safeguards and security mission at the Nevada Operations Office, there are currently no significant management issues. Due to uncertainty regarding the nature and scope of future operational missions at the Nevada Operations Office—particularly the Nevada Test Site—the safeguards and security program management issue receiving the most attention is the program planning requirements to meet various proposed future missions. While resumption of the traditional nuclear weapons testing mission appears to be unlikely, the Nevada Operations Office possesses a variety of facilities, most notably the Device Assembly Facility, that could contribute significantly to resolving such current Departmental mission objectives as stockpile reduction and safe, secure, long-term storage of special nuclear material. While the Nevada Operations Office continues to explore an expanded role for the Nevada Test Site in traditional DOE missions, potential missions such as solar energy development and support for commercial rocket launch/space exploration activities represent a distinct departure from existing safeguards and security requirements. Current safeguards and security program planning at the Nevada Operations Office involves harmonizing a continuing capability to perform traditional DOE safeguards and security missions with developing appropriate security measures to serve these new programs. The future success of the Nevada Operations Office safeguards and security program will depend upon the effective implementation of current plans to accomplish these varied and disparate proposed future missions.